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THE SCHOOL REVIEW

A JOURNAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE OUTLOOK FOR ENGLISH IN NEW YORK STATE.

Since the date of my last writing decided progress has been made in the direction of securing better school instruction in English.

I. The Cornell Faculty, at their meeting of February 3d, adopted the following measure :

In view of the imperfect preparation of many students in English, *Resolved*, that in and after June, 1894, and until further notice, certificates from schools be not accepted in lieu of the entrance examination in that subject. Special notice to be sent to all preparatory schools.

II. A few days later, February 9th, the Board of Regents adopted a series of resolutions :

1. That the Regents require satisfactory teaching of the English language, especially in composition, for at least three hours each week during the academic course, as a condition of admission to the University or of retention on the list of institutions in good standing and entitled to receive apportionments from the academic fund.*

The significance of this joint action is evident at a glance. On the one hand Cornell University decrees that all schools not under the Regents shall be subject to entrance tests in English. On the other, the Regents make generous provision for the teaching of English in all their schools. The appointment of a special examiner in English will give to the new curriculum additional value. It will be observed that the precise mode of treating papers correct in subject matter but faulty in English form, is at present a matter for discussion. But, in any event, one thing is clear : faulty papers *will not go through*.

* For further information concerning the action of the Regents, see the article, in this number of THE SCHOOL REVIEW, on *The Regents' Work in English*.

How long will it be before the good results of the change show themselves unmistakably? I am disposed to fix the date for private schools at June, 1894; certainly by that time our entrance examination will be as searching as we can make it. All persons interested in the matter, whether teachers or candidates, may, upon application to the Registrar, obtain a copy of the new regulations governing the examination. From schools under the Regents we shall expect a decided change by June, 1895; the full effect of the new curriculum perhaps by June, 1896.

During the intervening three years, 1893 to 1896, we must be prepared for some inequality and irregularity. It will be the duty of the English department to reduce the amount to a minimum, by imposing extra work perhaps, and certainly by rejecting at the term-examinations all students whose writing is evidently unsatisfactory. A step in this direction has already been taken; the present Freshman class has been treated much more rigorously than its predecessors, and many will be required to take the work over again.

In general I cherish the hope that the mere announcement of the resolve to demand thorough reform will accomplish much. Candidates are apt to respect the wishes of an institution that is in earnest. To those candidates who expect to present themselves this year under the old system of Regents' diploma and school certificate let me give a friendly warning: Make sure of your ability to express yourselves clearly and correctly. Your certificate or your diploma may be no guarantee of the ability; in that case you will only incur trouble and perhaps even mortification after admission. Henceforth Cornell will not tolerate poor English.

In strictness the following remarks upon the English course in Cornell, as it is to be, are out of place in a school journal which deals professedly with secondary education only. But in view of the prominence, not altogether enviable, acquired by Cornell in this discussion, the friends of education in general will doubtless waive technical objections for the sake of hearing what improvements we purpose making at home.

Junior and Senior Rhetoric are elective. I shall not speak of them further than to remark that I shall henceforth be relieved of Junior Rhetoric. Thanks to the intervention of President Schurman and the liberality of the Trustees, an assistant will be ap-

pointed to divide with Professor Emerson the burden of Sophomore Rhetoric. The time thus gained by Professor Emerson will enable him to conduct the Junior Rhetoric in my place. I expect to take charge of the Freshman class, not giving the instruction directly but guiding and controlling it at every step, preparing the reading and text-book work week by week with the instructors, and assigning the subjects for writing. These subjects will always be in direct connection with the reading. The reading will be in De Quincey, Macaulay, and Carlyle, authors offering the widest range of vocabulary. I may state here that the chief object of the Freshman year will be to acquire freedom and discrimination in the use of words, and a perception of shades of meaning. All doubtful work in this year will be examined and judged by me personally. The prescribed two hours will be two hours of actual attendance.

In like manner Sophomore English, in charge of Professor Emerson and his assistant, will require two hours of actual attendance. The reading will be in authors of the eighteenth century: Johnson, Goldsmith, Gibbon, Burke, and one or two others not yet determined upon. Minto's Prose will be used throughout the year. All writing will be upon the authors read, or upon collateral reading directly connected with the text. Special attention will be given to sentence-structure and paragraphing, and to Precision and Force.

Am I over sanguine in expecting the best results from such a plan strictly enforced at all points? The fundamental principle is obvious: No writing without incessant reading, no reading without incessant writing. The texts read will supply food for thought; the student is to be trained to express that thought in workmanlike manner.

J. M. Hart.